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Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali launches United Nations' fiftieth anniversary observances with opening of year-long exhibit of original United Nations Charter document.

+ Security Council deplores calls for overthrow of Government in Burundi; condemns extremist Groups undermining national reconciliation process.

+ UNICEF Executive Board begins first session for 1995; pays tribute to former Executive Director James P. Grant.

+ Effective human rights safeguards require political will, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights tells Human Rights Commission as it begins fifty-first session in Geneva.

+ Four-month cessation of hostilities agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina enters second month; agreement appears to be holding well.

+ Consultations underway in Afghanistan to constitute a mechanism for transfer of power in the country.

+ IFAD and Eritrea sign agreements to help finance lowlands development project - Fund's first operation in that country.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today launched the United Nations' fiftieth anniversary observances with the opening of a year-long exhibit of the original United Nations Charter document. This is the first time that the Charter is on display at the United Nations Headquarters. It is permanently stored in the United States Archives.

Describing the Charter as an extraordinary expression of humanity's shared values and aspirations, the Secretary-General noted that these values had not changed. The Charter is as relevant today as it was in 1945. Within the framework of the Charter, the United Nations invented peace-keeping;

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played a pivotal role in decolonization and in promoting self-determination; strengthened international law and helped enact comprehensive agreements on human rights. Mr. Boutros-Ghali said the United Nations has been a voice of the poor and the disadvantaged. It has provided substantial resources, technical assistance and policy advice; it is leading the way to a new integrated view of development, which extends beyond matters of economic growth to include political, social, environmental and democratic dimensions.

Speaking at the ceremony, Ambassador Madeleine Albright of the United States said the power of the Charter can be found not only in its eloquence, but in its origins. She said the United Nations has made great accomplishments in its first fifty years, adding that the anniversary celebrations accord an opportunity to commemorate these acheivements. She portrayed the United Nations as a living institution which has meant the difference between death and life for millions of children saved from disease, refugees from starvation, and civilians from the ravages of war.

Among others attending today's ceremony was New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

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The Security Council yesterday evening deeply deplored pronouncements by the leadership of one political party in Burundi which called for the withdrawal of that country's Prime Minister and "the overthrow of his Government by all means available". The Council denounced such attempts to threaten, by intimidation, the coalition Government established in line with Burundi's Convention of Government of 10 September 1994.

In a statement read on its behalf by Council President for January, Emilio J. Cardenas (Argentina), the Council condemned the extremist groups that "continued to undermine the national reconciliation process" in that central African nation. The Council called upon all concerned parties, especially the national security forces, to refrain from committing acts of violence and to support the Government institutions set up in line with the Convention.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has urged the authorities in Burundi to maintain order. In a statement issued today, he appealed to all political leaders to refrain from such practices contrary to the spirit of dialogue and compromise which made possible the signing of the Convention of Government. The Secretary-General warned that the international community cannot accept a repetition in Burundi of the tragic events that occurred last year in Rwanda.

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The first regular session for 1995 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) began today at Headquarters. In addition to discussing a broad range of topics focussing on management issues and

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emergency operations, representatives at the session paid tribute to former Executive Director James P. Grant, who died of cancer last Saturday, 28 January.

One of the reports presented at the session documents the nature and magnitude of the UNICEF response to emergencies in 1994. It says millions of people were placed at risk from violence, starvation and disease. More than 18 million people, including 7 million children, were forced to flee their homes and countries, while close to 25 million people were displaced within their own borders. It says that in a world population of 5.5 billion, available data indicates that one in every 130 people on earth has been forced into flight.

The Board is also expected to endorse a recommendation that the 1995 Maurice Pate Award be granted to Professor Ihsan Dogramaci of Turkey, in recognition of his outstanding contribution in the fields of public health and child survival and development. The annual award, named for UNICEF's first Executive Director, is given for exemplary leadership in promoting the well-being of children and women.

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Effective human rights safeguards require political will, as well as objective and efficient functioning of institutions, procedures and mechanisms, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ibrahima Fall told the Human Rights Commision. The Commission's fifty-first session opened in Geneva, Monday. Mr. Fall pointed out that this year's Commission session is doubly significant as it is taking place during the fiftieth year of the United Nations and will hear, for the first time, a report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Jose Ayala Lasso, High Commissioner for Human Rights, said his Office has offered to send a mission to Chechnya to ensure that human rights issues are included in discussions on a global solution. He has also proposed a coordination meeting to be held on Friday, 3 February, at Geneva between all the United Nations organizations and bodies concerned with strengthening the human rights presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The creation of the human rights operation in Rwanda set the example for future actions that could be taken in emergency situations.

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The head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, Mahmoud Mestiri, is now undertaking consultations with all Afghan faction leaders with a view to finalizing a list of names to constitute a mechanism for a transfer of power in the country, according to a UN spokesman. All the Afghan faction leaders have agreed in principle to the mechanism, and the list of names is expected to be finalized within one week.

Mr. Mestiri recently returned from Kabul and is currently in Islamabad. He will be travelling to Afghanistan again shortly for further consultations.

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The four-month cessation of hostilities agreement signed on New Year's Day between the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serbs enters its second month today. And despite some well-publicized violations, the agreemnt is reported to have held well through the first month, with hopes being raised that it will continue to be respected. Meanwhile, France has again called for an international peace Conference to address the outstanding issues in all of the former Yugoslavia. According to a UNPROFOR Radio report, Foreign Minister Alain Juppe of France has issued a statement saying that the negotiations have bogged down, and that in his view, only a summit of all the main protagonists can provide the necessary impetus. Mr. Juppe had made a similar call about six months ago.

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The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Eritrea have signed two agreements to help finance the eastern lowlands Wadi development project, the Fund's first operation in that country.

The project, worth a total of $20.1 million, aims at rehabilitating an area with a high potential to feed itself, providing employment in its own and neighbouring regions and contributing to national food security. The Sheeb and Wadi Labka area has suffered a dramatic fall in production as infrastructure deteriorated over three decades of war. Rehabilitation of the spate-irrigated agricultural systems of the eastern lowlands under this project represents an important contribution to poverty alleviation and improving food self-sufficiency in that area.

Improved on-farm irrigation, water control and downstream farmer-constructed distribution systems, better agricultural services and input supplies, livestock development, veterinary services, credit for acquisition of oxen and construction of rural roads are expected to help over 7,500 families in the eastern lowlands increase their production and incomes. Women, in particular, will benefit from the project's improved grain and oil-seed processing. More regular and higher crop production will increase on-farm labour and wage earning opportunities for some 4,000 highland families. In addition, nomadic livestock herders travelling through the area will also have access to the improved services while over 1,600 households in non-project villages will benefit from a new road.

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